

VZCZCXRO1604
PP RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHTA #0760/01 1081035
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 171035Z APR 08 ZEL
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2248
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 0478
RUCNCLS/SCA COLLECTIVE
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI 0110
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2159
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0130
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1899

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 000760

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADD "CLASSIFIED BY" LINE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/17/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KZ](#)
SUBJECT: LIFESTYLES OF THE KAZAZHSTANI LEADERSHIP
ASTANA 00000760 001.4 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECON CHIEF STEVEN FAGIN, REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D)

Summary

¶1. (C) Kazakhstan's political elites appear to enjoy typical hobbies -- such as travel, horseback riding, and skiing. Not surprisingly, however, they are able to indulge in their hobbies on a grand scale, whether flying Elton John to Kazakhstan for a concert or trading domestic property for a palace in the United Arab Emirates. This cable recounts several instances in which Embassy officers have learned of, or witnessed, the recreational habits of Kazakhstan's leaders. End Summary.

Sun and Horses

¶2. (C) President Nazarbayev, like many of his countrymen, has a strong affinity for horses. In 2007, emboff visited the presidential horse farm with the daughter of the farm's manager. The farm is located on the outskirts of Astana in a residential area, but is surrounded by a high-fence and security guards. Inside the gates are a large stable, indoor and outdoor riding arenas, and a clubhouse with a pool table, sauna, and exercise room. Emboff toured the stable and saw approximately forty horses from various parts of the world. Emboff's companion told him that Nazarbayev visits the horse farm on occasion, though not too frequently. She said that Nazarbayev's wife -- Sara Nazarbayeva -- never accompanies him, but claimed that sometimes his "second wife" comes to the horse farm. (Comment: Most Kazakhstanis are familiar with the rumor that Nazarbayev has a "second wife," a former airline stewardess, who is said by some to reside in London. More recently, there have been whispers that Nazarbayev has yet a "third wife," a former beauty queen. We have no concrete information about either relationship, although Taszhargan, an opposition newspaper, printed a sympathetic article about Sara Nazarbayeva which expounded on her status as Nazarbayev's "co-wife." End Comment.)

¶3. (C) Nazarbayev is also fond of traveling to warmer climes in the region. The UAE Ambassador told emboff that Nazarbayev had traded property in Borovoe -- a mountainous resort area of Kazakhstan north of Astana and sometimes likened to Switzerland -- for a "palace" in the Emirates. He did not

make clear whether the transaction was a permanent arrangement or only a temporary one. The head of Turkey's liaison office in Astana, Orhan Isik, told emboff that Nazarbayev has a mansion in Antaliya, which he visits 4-5 times a year. Isik claimed that Nazarbayev received the property as a gift in the early 1990's and now plans to use part of the land for the construction of a luxury hotel.

Dancing at the Nightclub

14. (C) On March 7, two days after his trip to the U.S. was cancelled, Prime Minister Masimov was spotted by emboff at Chocolat, one of Astana's trendiest nightclubs. Masimov entered at approximately 11:30 pm, accompanied by Presidential Administration head Kairat Kelimbetov, Astana mayor Askar Mamin, three middle-aged Kazakh women (presumably their wives), and a security detail. Although the club offers a VIP area, Masimov chose to sit at a table in full view of all of the club's patrons. Emboff lingered close to Masimov's group and saw several bottles of alcohol on the table. (Note: Another emboff had seen the group drinking earlier in the evening at a cigar bar at the Radisson Hotel, which is located in the same complex as Chocolat. End Note.) Masimov led his companions on to Chocolat's dance floor soon after their arrival. The dance floor holds approximately 100 people, and at the time perhaps 50 patrons were dancing. However, Masimov himself chose to dance on an empty stage above the dance floor. His companions quickly tired but Masimov remained, dancing alone and animatedly on the stage for another 15-20 minutes. At approximately 1:00 am, Masimov and his retinue left the club.

Skiing with the Oligarchs

15. (C) In September 2007, Kazakhstani oligarch Aleksandr Mashkevich -- the co-founder of metals and mining giant Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation and, according to

ASTANA 00000760 002.4 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECON CHIEF STEVEN FAGIN, REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D)

Forbes magazine, the 334th wealthiest man in the world -- hosted a dinner at his house in Almaty for two visiting U.S. congressmen. Only two Kazakhstanis attended the event, State Secretary Kanat Saudabayev and his assistant. Judging from

SIPDIS
the friendly banter between Saudabayev and Mashkevich, the two have a quite cordial personal relationship. Mashkevich told a lengthy anecdote about a ski vacation that he and Saudabayev had taken together in Europe.

16. (C) Saudabayev had hosted a codel at that same Almaty residence in 2005, without Mashkevich in attendance. At that time, when the Ambassador asked Saudabayev whose house it was, he would only say that it belonged to "a friend." Saudabayev has twice hosted visiting USG officials for a meal at Mashkevich's Astana residence -- both times without Mashkevich. It is not clear what Mashkevich is spending his billions on, but it is certainly not culinary talent. On all four occasions the Ambassador has eaten at one of his houses, the menu has been similar and focused on beshparmak (boiled meat and noodles) and plov. The wait staff appeared to be graduates of a Soviet cafeteria training academy. The wine, at least, was somewhat upscale with reasonably good French vintage bottles uncorked for the guests. The Astana residence has wooden plaques on the doors that would fit in nicely in a Wyoming hunting lodge but are somewhat out of touch with the upscale "Euro-remont" that is so popular among the Kazakhstani elite.

Private Concerts with the Stars

17. (C) In 2007, President Nazarbayev's son-in-law, Timur Kulibayev, celebrated his 41st birthday in grand style. At a small venue in Almaty, he hosted a private concert with some of Russia's biggest pop-stars. The headliner, however, was Elton John, to whom he reportedly paid one million pounds for this one-time appearance. (Note: The British Ambassador relayed a slightly different story, with an unknown but obviously well-heeled friend arranging and paying for Sir Elton's gig. End Comment.) There have been separate reports that Nelly Furtado performed at the August 2007 birthday bash for Kulibayev's wife, Dinara Nazarbayeva. Kulibayev also appears willing to spend his fortune on others. According to Turkish diplomat Isik, when the Kempinski group recently built luxury villas in Bodrum, Turkey, Kulibayev bought up a number of them -- at a cost of 4-5 million dollars each -- and doled them out as gifts to friends and family.

Sports and Politics Mix

18. (C) Sports and politics mixed seamlessly in Almaty on April 2, when some of Kazakhstan's most prominent political figures participated in the Beijing Olympics torch relay. Torchbearers included President Nazarbayev, Presidential Administration business affairs head Bolat Utemuratov, Nur Otan party first deputy chairman Adilbek Dzhaksybekov, and Agency for the Regulation of Natural Monopolies head Mazhit Yesenbayev. All of these bigwigs, except Nazarbayev himself, could justify their participation in the relay based not on their high-ranking political offices, but rather on their prominent official positions in the Kazakhstani sports world. Utemuratov just happens to head Kazakhstan's Tennis Federation, while Dzhaksybekov chairs the Football Federation -- a position previously held by ex-Nazarbayev son-in-law Rakhat Aliyev. Yesenbayev heads the Judo Federation. KazMunayGaz chairman Uzakbay Karabalin, who heads the Boxing Federation, and Nazarbayev son-in-law Timur Kulibayev, who heads the Golf Federation, also shared in the glory of carrying the Olympic torch. One prominent sport federation president who missed the torch call was Defense Minister Daniyal Akhmetov. He is head of the scandal-ridden Cycling Federation that sponsored a team in last year's Tour de France which flunked the drug test.

Relaxation the Good, Old Soviet Way

19. (C) Kazakhstan's political elites also have recreational tastes that are not so exotic. Some, in fact, prefer to relax the old-fashioned way. Defense Minister Akhmetov, a self-proclaimed workaholic, appears to enjoy loosening up in the tried and true "homo sovieticus" style -- i.e., drinking

ASTANA 00000760 003.4 OF 003

CLASSIFIED BY POL/ECON CHIEF STEVEN FAGIN, REASONS 1.4
(B) AND (D)

oneself into a stupor. While most of our accounts of Akhmetov's indulgences with the bottle are hearsay, we do have "eyes on" for one episode which supports the rumors. In June 2007, Akhmetov showed up in grand form for a meeting with a visiting senior U.S. Defense Department official. Making no attempt to conceal his condition -- slouching back in his chair and slurring all kinds of Russian participles -- Akhmetov explained to this very senior guest that he had just been at a cadet graduation reception "toasting Kazakhstan's newly-commissioned officers." Who was toasted more -- the Defense Minister or the cadets -- is a matter of pure speculation. Akhmetov's excesses do not solely extend to the

bottle. An insider at Astana's Radisson Hotel recently told us about preparations for the unbelievably lavish and expensive wedding of Akhmetov's son. In the Kazakh tradition, the parents of the groom are responsible for the wedding -- so it would seem that Akhmetov must have footed the bill.

ORDWAY